

**IN THE CLAIMS**

This is a complete and current listing of the claims, marked with status identifiers in parentheses. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A drive apparatus for at least one of open-loop ~~or~~ and closed-loop control of a safety-critical component, comprising: having

— a switching device ~~which has~~ including a first switch (S1) and a second switch (S2), ~~which is~~ connected in series with the first, for switching the safety-critical component; ;

— a first control device (C1) for reception of an input signal and emission of a first drive signal; and

— a second control device (C2) for reception of the input signal and for emission of a second drive signal, wherein

— the first switch (S1) in the switching device can be driven is drivable by the first control device (C1) and the second switch (S2) in the switching device can be driven is drivable by the second control device (C2), wherein characterized in that

— the first switch (S1) and the second switch (S2) can be driven are drivable with a time offset with respect to one another, and wherein the first and the second control device operate on the master/slave principle.

2. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch are in each case a relay or a contactor.

3. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch are in each case a semiconductor switch.

4. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch in each case comprise an optocoupler.

5. (Currently Amended) An electrical machine having a load circuit and a drive apparatus as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1.

6. (Currently Amended) The electrical machine as claimed in claim 5, ~~also having~~ further comprising an emergency-off switch ~~(X)~~ for supplying the input signal.

7. (Currently Amended) A method for at least one of open-loop or and closed-loop control of a safety-critical component, the method comprising by:

provisioning of a switching device ~~which has~~ including a first switch (S1) and a second switch (S2), ~~which is~~ connected in series with the first, for switching the safety-critical component;

provisioning of a first control device (C1), ~~which is~~ connected to the switch (S1), and of a second control device (C2) ~~which is~~ connected to the second switch (S2);

reception of an input signal;

emission of emitting a first drive signal from the first control device (C1) to the first switch (S1) in the switching device on the basis of the input signal; and

emission of emitting a second drive signal from the second control device (C2) to the second switch (S2) in the switching device on the basis of the input signal, wherein

~~characterized in that~~

— the first and the second drive signal are emitted with a time offset with respect to one another, and wherein the first and the second drive signal are produced using a master/slave process as a function of the input signal, thus resulting in the defined time offset.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the switching device is used to switch a load circuit of an electrical machine.

9. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of~~ claims 7 ~~or~~ 8, wherein the input signal is produced by an emergency-off switch ~~(X)~~.

10.-12. (Cancelled).

13. (New) The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the input signal is produced by an emergency-off switch.